

Tropical Fruits for Brevard County

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There are many people who feel that if a plant doesn't produce something edible then there's no reason to have it in their yard. It is possible to design an entire landscape with edible plants since there are trees, shrubs, vines and ground covers that produce edible fruits, foliage, etc. Also, don't forget that many herbs can be used as ornamentals too.

Many people already grow avocados, bananas, blueberries, figs, grapes, loquats, mangos, papayas and of course, many types of citrus. There are many tropical fruits though, that are being grown in our county such as Barbados cherries, carambolas, jaboticabas, longans, lychees, macadamia nuts and many of the annonas, such as atemoya.

For anyone interested in growing some of these tropical delights in your landscape (or possibly a large container) here is some information on some of the tropical fruits being grown in Brevard County.

- The atemoya is a small tree with a mature height and spread of about 30 feet. The fruit's pulp is white with a custard-like consistency and has a sweet, pleasing flavor when ripe. The atemoya is best adapted to areas with moderate, evenly-distributed rainfall, but it can be grown here if irrigation is provided regularly during dry spells. Well-drained soil is a must, as is full sun.
- Barbados cherry grows into a large, densely branched shrub, or small tree if pruned to form a central trunk. It can vary in shape from a low and spreading habit to a more upright and open habit. The soft, juicy, thin-skinned fruit is light to deep crimson when mature. The flesh is yellow-orange and high in vitamin C. The plant may have three to five crops per year.
- Carambola, also known as star fruit, is another small-sized evergreen tree that can grow 20-30 feet tall with a 25 foot spread. The fruit are two to six inches long and when cut in cross section appear star-shaped. The flesh is crisp, very juicy and without fiber. The fruit is sweetest when allowed to ripen on the tree. Carambolas are primarily used as a fresh fruit, though they can be pickled, used in sauces or made into wine or jelly.
- Jaboticaba normally only grows to 15 feet tall in our sandy soils. The fruit resembles grapes, but has thicker, tougher, almost-black skin. The fruit is produced directly on the trunk and larger branches. The flesh has a pleasant, grape-like flavor. The fruit can be eaten fresh or made into jellies, jams or wine. Both fruit and juice are well-preserved by freezing.
- The longan is a handsome, evergreen tree with dense, dark green foliage that can grow to 40 feet. The flavor of the fruit is sweet and pleasant. The longan is used fresh, dried or canned. It can be used the same way as the lychee and can be a substitute for it in recipes. It also freezes well in its skin.
- Lychee is an excellent fresh fruit but can also be frozen whole (in the peel), canned (without the peel), or dried (in the peel) for later use. The tree may grow to 40 feet.
- Macadamia nuts are normally associated with Hawaii but they can also be grown in Florida. These trees can get quite tall, up to 60 feet. Mature trees can withstand winter temperatures as low as 26 degrees for short periods with minor damage to the foliage. Supplemental irrigation is important, particularly during the flowering and fruit-setting season.

These are just a few of the tropical fruits that can be grown here in Brevard. For those of you who are interested in information on tropical fruits, deciduous fruits, etc., you can simply call us at 633-1702 and we can mail you the information or e-mail me at sasc@ufl.edu and I can send you the information electronically.